

Fall 1979

Connecticut College Literary Journal

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| The Glassblower | Carolyn Abbott |
| Fencewalking | Gildy Bladen |
| Tosca Cafe | Wendell Brown |
| Sunset | Steve Cloutier |
| TO THE CHILD WITHIN MY MOTHER'S WOMB | Carolyn Abbott |
| Untitled | Sara L. Townsend |
| Cousins | Gildy Bladen |
| Elegy For My Father | Sara L. Townsend |
| Untitled | Matthew Gilbert |
| Etude At The Beach | Nancy Minnieks |
| Untitled | Denise Wheelless |
| At the Bar | Andrew Rodwin |
| The Mother | Gildy Bladen |
| The Oft' Visited Old Mill Pond | Laura de Baun |
| The Sleeping Gypsy | Carylyn Abbott |
| The Butterfly Book | Carolyn Abbott |
| The Natural Sources of Luminescence | Laura de Baun |

THE GLASSBLOWER

How perfectly he puckers, blowing
small glass planets, delicately
blooming ice-animals. Slowly,
smoothly he gives his air
to the hot, thick fluid. Shapes
bulge in crystal bubbles from
his breath.

Ah! He winces at the sound
of cash-register jingle—
clash of cash. He turns his head
over a scornful shoulder,
to the shop behind him. Tiny
creatures glisten in their
transparent jungle.

A dimple, unwanted, has broken
in a half-formed dolphin, bobbing
on the tube, pressed to his lips.

Noiselessly, precisely, with motions
of a mime, he begins again. There!
Near-weightless dolphin snout becoming!
Sparkling fin, wet with light. Graceful
glass arch of a tail is sending rainbows
above to his face, poised in anticipation.

by Carolyn Abbott

FENCEWALKING

that summer we fencewalked

over and over

the round rails tipping and

throwing

the gray wood splintering and

stabbing bare feet

Afternoons flushing and deepening into

evenings

balancing continuously, fervidly into the
dark

we had a race going, I was

champ

(going four times around without
stopping)

When I fell,

hitting my head

sitting on sandy grass hurting

watching

While she balanced five,

six around

finally standing poised on the last upright

finally conceding;

leading the fencewalkers home

as I had the day before

by Gildy Bladen

TOSCA CAFE

It was a mean night
the kind that reminds black eyes
of bruised knuckles
raw
the sidewalks oozed
brown slime
reflecting the streetlights
shining like exposed muscle
torn from the skin

Inside the cafe
the hiss of the steam machine
pinched ears
with sharp teeth
sitting high in command
of the bar
barking, spewing

Hiding in the crevasses of
a booth made for eight
dwarfed,
just two
in the red vinyl
we sipped
from the night.

Like old varnish
yellowed light brushed over us
cracked as it hardened
into sharp shadows
You were lacking an eye

Wordless sounds made sentences
lips moving as if it mattered
chewing at times
the Italian operas drifting
from the jukebox
as if it mattered
that we should taste them.

Wendell Brown

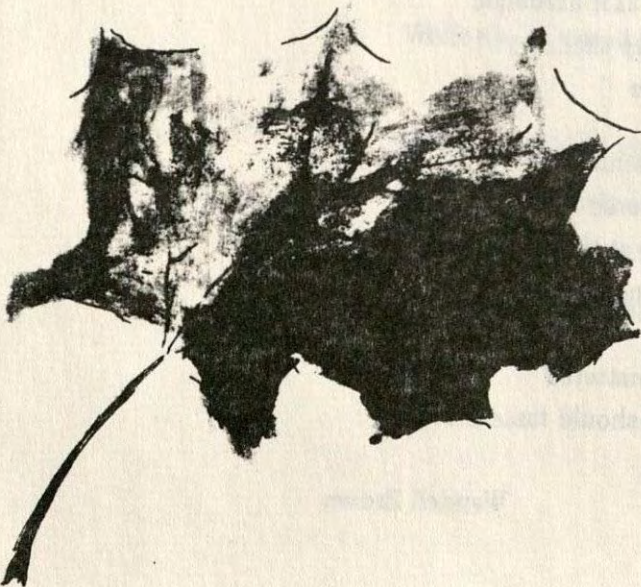
SUNSET

I recall a sunset once all in fragments,
a stained-glass window that shattered and fell
in its colors at my feet.
I recall a shrinking, shivering red ball of cold fire,
and the shimmering, weaving horizon it dipped to meet.

And walking away how the frozen ground soundlessly cracked
as a pale and icy wind stepped behind my heels.
And the soft white falling down, uncoloring the world,
with the silence ringing loudly in my ears.

The last rays of the sun I watched
reaching across the ground and gripping, to not be pulled away,
Singing in a hollow key to the people hurry by,
til the wind was dark and leaned upon my shoulder with a sigh.

Steve Cloutier



TO THE CHILD WITHIN MY MOTHER'S WOMB

When I kiss her
in the morning
her skin is warmer to my lips,
she holds a smile I cannot touch.

There is a redness rising
closer to the surface of her flesh
I cannot know.

Brother and I cuddle closer
after dinner, and Dad
watches with a new mouth
widening in his eyes,
and his hands growing
tender towards us.

We lay our ears to her stomach
and we hear a child rolling
in her calmer night, and we warm.

We feel a fluttering
within her and we laugh.

We know the motion of loving
is as distant and as close
as the heartbeat of an unborn child.

by Carolyn Abbott

UNTITLED

I'd like to rip you into a million pieces
It's not your fault, though, that people forget
to have portraits painted when they're alive
so that artists must struggle later
with photographs and relative memories
And me—who they say looks like him
so that for three hours I had to sit
And still you're all wrong
The hairline's backwards, the lip's too full
But it's not your fault Mother hangs you there,
As if you were him, over the desk where he used to sit
I know you were only painted from photographs and
relative memories
And me—who they say looks like you.

by Sara L. Townsend

COUSINS

Visiting again, I am startled by the changes
in David
between 13 and 15

His legs are long; so is his face
his voice croaks a bit (glad I didn't laugh)

Now clearly I see the line I have stepped over
since I last visited
as I see him tripping on it
without knowing

Unconsciously I change before this strange boy
trying to be funny, wondering is my hair neat
(am I impressing him?)

Realizing he will no longer grant me credit merely
for being a Big Kid,
I wonder at his opinion of me.

by Gildy Bladen



ELEGY FOR MY FATHER

I hated the Ivy creeping
over you, clinging to you, covering
your name
I hated those shrubs closing in
on you from both sides
I hated the grass growing
over the loose dirt too fast
and the melting of the numbing snow
and the crocuses coming too soon
and I hated the Spring
that came anyway—
so that I only hate the Softening
of the passing each year
that lets me come less often now
And when I do—
Hate the Ivy less.

by Sara Townsend

UNTITLED

There's Mrs. Baker. Her husband drowned last month in a swimming accident, and here she is at the beach. She sits perched with her bathing cap on, but she doesn't go in the water. She looks mad, her eyes fastened like a steel mirror to the ocean. Her feet keep kicking into the sand in an angry rhythm. I sympathize with her; it must be a heavy loss when someone close to you dies.

She had been swimming with Mr. Baker when he was pulled under, but she was not a sufficiently strong swimmer and couldn't even attempt a rescue. And now at sixty years old she is alone and angry, at the beach. I can see her broad grimace beneath her bathing cap as she watches the water.

It's a beautiful day. The sun shines soft and light on my head and when it gets too warm I dip my feet in the water. The beach isn't very crowded today, at least on the Jewish side. Traditionally, the beach to the right of the rocky pier is for Jews, and the beach on the left is for Non-Jews. It is only Mrs. Baker and I here on the right, along with the lifeguard. I'm feeling lonely, but it will never overwhelm me; the world of literature awaits and I only have to put my mind in it.

I rarely go to the beach, and I never swim. I started the short walk to the library earlier this afternoon, when the friendly faced lifeguard with a sharp smile offered me a ride. He told me I walked as though I was needing a ride, so he stopped. When I told him I was going to the library, he insisted I come to the beach, it being such a "sunny, sunny" day. He added that he had a book I would want to read. I agreed to go, thinking perhaps I might also get a tan. Then he looked at me from under his shaggy bleached blond hair and asked if many people go to the library on hot days like this.

"Well, the world of literature beckons a lot of people." I spoke carefully, because he seemed to be annoyed by the thought.

"How much healthier we would all be if we came to the beach more often." He lifted his chin a bit from behind the steering wheel and added: "We all need a good swim once in a while."

There were a few books in the back seat, so I began to flip through them nervously.

"Take this," he stated while handing me a yellowed, worn book from beneath his car seat. "And take your time with it."

I was careful not to be rude and accepted the thick book. I split up from him when we got to the beach; I could see he wasn't in a conversational mood by the way he struck a solid glare at the ocean and put on his sunglasses.

The title of the book, *The Holocaust*, seems like a strange subject to read at the beach. The waves gently swell and soak the sand as I wonder about the disaster; it's so hard to believe that millions of people were so brutally murdered only thirty-five years ago. And all that is left is a *book*.

Mrs. Baker is talking to the lifeguard. My father told me that at first she had tried to attack him for failing to save Mr. Baker's life; he was dozing on the sand of this same beach and could not hear Mrs. Baker's desperate cries. But now she seems to have reconciled herself to his negligence extremely well, and they are submissively standing beside each other as they both face the ocean. If my father had drowned here, I'm sure I would never be as resolved to the beach as they are.

The lifeguard just looked over at me; I could feel his sunglasses bore into me, even though I didn't face him. I can't be rude: *The Holocaust*. I am Jewish, but none of my relatives were killed by the Nazis. Book. . .Chapter One: The Definition of a Jew. Chapter Two: The Gradual Removal of Jewish Rights. Chapter Three: The Ghetto. Chapter Four: Resistance. Chapter Five: The Death Camps. The Death Camps. . .heavy blackness. . .fenced-in darkness . . .tired weakness. . .death camp. . .dirt. . .

"Wake-up you smelly Jew." The hard eyes that stared at me held a pair of thin, V-shaped eyebrows above them. I grabbed my side, it was bleeding where he had kicked me. I stood up and tried to brush the dirt from my bloody side with my dirty hand. He pushed me into the line moving out of the dark, stinking bunkhouse.

Everyone in line was unfamiliar, familiar. Only round skin heads with steel eyes. My nose stung from the odor. My skin was hard and dirty. The line pushed me on.

Outside the bunkhouse, the air was stinging. It was biting my nose. It was scraping my lungs. It was swallowing my feet. It licked my neck.

The line stopped in an open area of hard dirt. I grabbed a shovel, like the man before me. He started digging, and I did the same. It hurt my bones, but it kept me warm. I dug as hard as I could and soon I began to sweat. The time was passing, but it didn't feel like my time. I just kept digging.

The man with the V-shaped eyebrows clasped my shoulder bone and thrust me in the direction of the food line. I stumbled and fell against the hard ground. He kicked me and yelled, "Get up now, you sweaty pig." My side began to bleed again. I was having trouble getting myself up, but when I finally rose he knocked me down again and muttered, "You lazy Jew. You stink. No food for lazy, smelly Jews."

I lay on the dirt feeling hungry. The air began to bite again. It was prickling my sweaty neck. It was pin-crawling up my legs. It tightened the skin on my head. I struck out and hit. I hit the air.

I went back to the shovel and dug more. I felt better sweating, and watched my salty drops drain into the ditch. It was getting deeper. The man beside me dropped his shovel and began to moan. Then he dropped. He fell into the ditch. I held my shovel tightly and moved over, closer to the line of men on the other side of me. I dug hard at the dark and hateful dirt.

The man with the V-shaped eyebrows yelled for us to stop and walk in a line to the "garbage tank." As we passed him, he cursed and whipped us. We got to the "garbage tank" and the man with the V-shaped eyebrows told us to cart the "garbage" to the ditch and dump it there.

The rubbery, mangled bodies were hard to load into the wheelbarrels, but they weren't too heavy. The line then curled back to the ditch and the bodies were dumped. As we passed him, the man with the V-shaped eyebrows spat at us and growled: "You are all Judas. Do you hear me? You are Judas."

We covered the bodies with dirt and then the line proceeded to the wash-house. The man with the V-shaped eyebrows hosed us off as we passed him. The water mingled with my dirty sweat. The force of the water stung my bones. It wore on my skin. It felt like rock pellets against my head skin. I struck out and tried to smash the water. I hit the water.

The line kept moving towards the bunkhouse. I had to go to the bathroom, but there was not one in sight. I couldn't leave the line because the man with the V-shaped eyebrows stood beside us with a whip. The gnawing within me grew, but there was no release.

When I got out of the line and into my bunk bed, I thought of my father. I wanted to speak to him and tell him. I decided to write a letter to him. I yelled out "Please may I have a pen and some paper. . .please." No one responded. I yelled again. I screamed. Someone tossed them to me. I held the pen over the paper. Dear Father. Dear Father.

I knocked the pen and paper to the dirt floor. I lay my head on the wooden bedboard and began to doze. Visions of home came to me. The wooden table with the rich grain. My bedroom. My feathered pillow. The smell of food. The bathroom. The fireplace. My mother and my brothers. My father. My name. . .

The dreams pressed on my head. They put their palms on my forehead and pressed. I cursed dreams. They don't exist for me NOW. Then I slept, the sleep of revenge. . .the sleep of the future. . .a deep sleep. . .

The noise of the waves startles me. They crash and bite into the sand. I sit up and face the ocean. I am sweating. I run and jump into the water. I move and swirl and swim. I can see Mrs. Baker and the lifeguard survey me in a resigned satisfaction. It is cold in the water, but I don't feel lonely. I can feel Mr. Baker here. I feel others, many others here. I can't forget them, even though I must step out of the water.

Matthew Gilbert

ETUDE AT THE BEACH

I lay stretched
like the strings on your guitar.
Your rippling fingers,
like gentle waves
send me hollow pieces of driftwood,
filled with grave melodic thoughts.

Cool frothing ebb,
keeps perfect rhythm over my fingertips.
Clear melodies spray the dunes of my face.
A gentle strum
splashes drops between my lips,
parting to taste the brine.

The current of your song passes
weaving into tired grasses
dancing,
back and forth
And lullabies my red body
into the warm
deep
maroon sun.

Nancy Minnicks

add another brick
to the wall
someone lied
took a train, two planes
and a bus
transferring to the local
at Fulton and Main
just to deceive me
when the truth
and my salvation were
a short walk
across the street
no tears fall
just add
another brick
to the wall.

Denise Wheelless

AT THE BAR

The barkeep passed a glass of Pabst:
I grabbed. A bush of arms
Had overgrown and clogged the space,
Embowered, sipping (charms).

The thicket moved motility
Should occupy the room.
No nays, No branches, factions, splits.
But absence. Left for whom—

ever. I cupped my glass of draft
And judged the harmony
Chanting, as reflectively as
A looking fish's eye.

Then drifting, with the tides of limbs
Let numb my tongue slipped sleep.
The ebb away of high flown day.
Sun sets, on bleating sheep.

I either cut a breaking swath!
Or, root, around the spring
Of Pabst, bestreaming from the earth,
Blue ribbon stream me bring.

Andrew Rodwin

THE MOTHER

I look at you daughter,

Stranger

I seen in you

myself

We talk sometimes,

washing the supper dishes

You have an opinion on everything.

I remember uncertainty

at your age

(you don't show it)

Have you learned something I didn't?

Can you make me remember

the time after childhood

the looking grown

but not?

by Gildy Bladen

THE OFT' VISITED OLD MILL POND

One can hardly believe,
looking at the small wind-mill pond,
that it fed great sails whirring
through the fields shaking apart
grassy nests with a terrible wind.

Or that in winter powerful, booming
thicknesses of ice were hacked from the surface
and stored between cool field-stone walls
of the house that companions the pond.

Even with its loss of power,
the pond embraces the summer life
fiercely competing and populating
among its weeds and brackish edges.
Weightless dragonflies of mostly blue
skim the algae surface
settling on a twig or a small point of stone.

Often, I squat in the only open space
to see the tadpoles darting.
Like quick dissolving ink drops,
they seem to melt away not swim
eluding net or study. And grown,
the symphony of green frogs at night
demands respect for the tiny, blinded reptiles
living so close to mud.

Laura de Baun

THE SLEEPING GYPSY (by Henri Rousseau)

His robe flows like a crumpled rainbow
on flesh as dark as bitter chocolate.
He floats in a sea of sand, arching
on the cavern of a coarse wave.

His features are lost in a dream.
His fingers idle on his walking stick—
frosted in moonlight, glinting
like the edge of a knife.
His mandolin echoes in the wind beside him.

The night drops, a murky lagoon, glazed
with algae. Surfacing
the melting moon paints a frame
of lighter green.

The gypsy cannot smell the sour breath
of hunger close, close to his ear,
cannot see the mane leaning like wheat
in the wind—or the eyes that see
only meat. He cannot sense the nobility
of the tail poised as if to paint
the night in blood.

by Carolyn Abbott



THE BUTTERFLY BOOK

I remember being five or so
when a little girl said,
carelessly (with painful eyes)
“come to my house and play”
so I did.

There her mother was frighteningly friendly
and made cookies just for the occasion.
She gave us each a net,
and after brushing her daughter’s hair,
sent us off to catch butterflies—
so we did.

We put them in mayonnaise jars
and they flapped their furious woman wings
until I felt small and weak and plain and said,
“I’m gonna let mine go”
so I did.

The girl with the aching eyes
took hers back to the loud lady
and I stood
and watched them
stick pins in the velvet-eyed wings
and press her down
and down
and out as flat as the paper,
She lay, blank and simplified in cellophane
and they smiled—“a butterfly book”
and hot black—silver wings flapped madly through my eyes
and from my mouth came
many-colored-thundering-whirring-things.

Carolyn Abbott

THE NATURAL SOURCES OF LUMINESCENCE

The far southern river where,
dipping low, we caught jelly fish
flashing dull green in stocking nets
to candle our nights.

Just off the darkest night and water pier,
the split globes of their bodies,
firmly elusive, glowed with a lingering force;
could only have been magic. Their spell
drawing us back after the fishermen gone.

The fireflies in a jar
one June evening in Connecticut.
Or this night in complex pattern,
lighting up by scores, crowning the air
over the sweet bushes with a dance.
A sight of greater universe
than constellations thickly covering
a Northern sky.

Laura de Baun

